



Issue 3

August 2005

B&Q application – Don't be fooled

The B&Q planning application continues to be a major focus for the SHRA, other action groups and residents in general. As we saw from the Open Meeting on 18 July we are now finding more widespread support from elected representatives for our position that the proposal is damaging not only for the Harbour but for the principles of the Eastbourne Borough Plan.

On the 13 July SHRA Committee Members met with B&Q, Sovereign Harbour Ltd and 'Community Connect', the consultants working on their behalf, to get a clearer understanding of their objectives and to stress residents concerns. It is probably no surprise that neither side changed its views but it was interesting to note that 'Community Collect' intends to lobby residents to support their proposal by distributing a 'glossy' and questionnaire to all households on the Harbour. This is of course their right, but please do not be confused by professional presentation the essential factors are as follows:

This is an **outline** planning application, **NOT a detailed one**, and as such none of the colourful maps and artists impressions are binding on B&Q and Sovereign Harbour Ltd. There is no guarantee that any of this will be built and certainly there is no interest being shown in the Business Park shown on Commercial Area 2. Articles in the press suggest that B&Q are moving away from developing larger ('Warehouse') stores so it is not clear to SHRA whether B&Q will finally take on Commercial Area 1 if they succeed in their application.

There are only two material things being sought from this application. Firstly, change of land use from B1 (light industrial) to A1 (retail) which makes the land potentially more valuable to a developer in a monetary sense. In the context of these sites and the Eastbourne Borough Plan (EBP), B1 reflects the intent that this land supports a prestigious development on Eastbourne's Eastern gateway in keeping with the overall status of the largest marina development in Northern Europe. It recognises that high density, quality jobs will come from this as one would expect from major Companies on a Business Park development. Such a development would enhance Eastbourne and provide around 2000 jobs for the local area. **Do not be misled by any suggestions made that,**

unless we support B&Q, we will end up with low quality industrial development such as warehouses, car breakers, etc. This would not align with the intent of the EBP and, from discussions with a senior member of the town's Planning Department, they would not sacrifice such an important site to the town to developments without prestige or merit to Eastbourne. The second thing actually sought by the application is access consent for a roundabout and short link road from Pevensy Bay Road to Pacific Drive.

The suggestion made by the applicants is, that if they are given a change in land use to retail on Commercial Area 1, there will be more funds to 'subsidise' a Business Park on Commercial Area 2. At present the 'value of the land', coupled with development costs, and the fact that nobody would be interested in leasing the land given these costs, are said to preclude developing a Business Park. However, common sense would suggest that the 'high monetary value' of this land sounds like a 'red herring'. Land is worth what it is worth at its currently designated use. If Carillion are over-valuing it, of course nobody will be interested in developing it. An analogy would be that a farmer may like to have his field re-categorised from agricultural to residential use so it is worth 100 times more. However, Councils make such decisions on their being an overwhelming need for housing, not with the objective of making a big profit for the farmer. The real need for Eastbourne is for a Business Park built on land realistically valued to allow such a development to take place. Raising the value of the land by changing its designated use would undoubtedly be attractive to its owner but is potentially damaging to the objectives of the EBP.

Although the deadline for objections has passed, the SHRA have been told that further objections will be accepted, right up to the planning meeting. We would, therefore, urge any residents who are against the planning application, but who have not yet written to the Council with their objections, to do so as soon as possible. We will let you know when the date of the Planning Committee Meeting which will address this application is scheduled. We urge all interested residents to attend the Meeting, and make their views known.

Councillors oppose B&Q application at Open Meeting

Some of the fireworks expected at the open meeting organised by the SHRA at the Haven School on 18th July did not materialise.

Well over 200 harbour residents packed the school hall to listen to the views of local politicians and the campaign group 'No to B&Q'. The meeting was opened by Rick Runalls, the SHRA chairman, who told the audience that the survey of harbour residents, conducted by the SHRA, had shown an overwhelming opposition to the B&Q application. Consequently, the association would be formally objecting to the proposal on behalf of harbour residents.

Not all of the invited guests were able to attend, notably our MP, Nigel Waterson, who was engaged on Parliamentary business. The first guest to speak, deputy-leader of the council, Conservative David Elkin, voiced his serious doubts on the ability of the B&Q application to deliver the number of promised new jobs. Councillor Elkin, who is leading the Conservatives in this matter, had previously expressed opposition to the application in the local media, and in correspondence to SHRA committee members. Next to speak, Sovereign Ward councillor, Patrick Warner, who had previously expressed his qualified support for the application, said he too now had very serious doubts over the validity of B&Q's claims concerning the number of jobs that the proposed development would create. He restated his opinion that, if the proposed business park could be guaranteed by the construction of the B&Q, he would support the application. However, both stated that they felt unable to support the application in its current form.

LibDem parliamentary candidate, Stephen Lloyd, confirmed his total opposition to the B&Q application. He said that application was for outline consent and did not actually guarantee a single job. Further, he stated that a B&Q warehouse in the proposed location was completely inappropriate and in contravention of the objectives of the town plan. He also congratulated the new SHRA committee on their achievements in the short time they had been together.

Green Party spokesman, Clive Gross, told the meeting that, not only would the proposed warehouse not deliver the promised jobs, but that its effect on small traders would force many of them out of business and have a detrimental effect on the local economy. In his opinion, he said, the net effect was likely to be a loss of jobs to the town. He urged residents to examine the actions of our elected representatives and the unelected officers who advised them.

EBC opposition leader, David Tutt, told the meeting that the LibDem group were opposed to the application and their members would vote against it at the planning meeting. He urged everybody to write to the council, and to attend the planning meeting in large numbers. He said that the council were already aware that the normal facilities were totally inadequate for the expected public attendance, and were looking for an alternative venue for the meeting.

'No to B&Q' chairman, Paul Rhodes, told the audience that the B&Q application was just 'smoke and mirrors'. It was, he said, a 'Trojan Horse', a ploy to gain change of use on the land to A1 Retail, which would have the effect of vastly increasing the value of the land. He warned that, if change of use was obtained, with outline planning consent for the development of the land, there was little that the planners could do to prevent the area being turned into a retail park, with all of the disturbance and disruption to life that that would bring.

The debate was then opened to the floor. Several speakers voiced their opposition to the inappropriate nature of the application and the failure of our elected representatives to prevent it. The suggestion that we should examine the actions of our representatives and, if necessary field independent candidates to oppose them, was very well received. Fear was expressed that the interests of developers could be put ahead of the interests of residents. The view was expressed that it is clearly the responsibility of both councillors and unelected officers to ensure that Eastbourne's interests, as expressed in the Borough Plan, are given absolute priority.

In closing, Rick Runalls urged everybody in the room to write to the council, objecting to the application and asking to speak at the planning committee meeting. The closing date for objections was 31st July but, Rick said, Chief Planning Officer, Ian Hayes, had assured him that objections would be accepted almost up to the date of the planning meeting. So if you have not yet submitted your objection, don't wait, do it now. For help in drafting your letter, visit www.notobandq.org.uk

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Five Development Sites on the Harbour

The Council has circulated a 'consultation document' which identifies five sites on which they are seeking options for development. Most, if not all, harbour residents have had a communication to this effect although, unless they have internet access or have visited the Council Offices, they would not have seen the 64 page options appraisal by Humberts Leisure which underpins this. The sites are owned by Carillion, who undoubtedly will want to maximise their profit from them, best served by more high density housing, followed closely by commercial development. This is one of the last chances to mitigate the over-development we live with on the Harbour with socially essential facilities.

The SHRA submitted extensive comments on the Council Document and its reference. The SHRA has also made it clear that critical options for these sites include a Community Centre. This would be capable of being used for day nursery, and mother and toddler facilities for young families, a meeting place for the elderly residents to socialise, a Youth Club for children and teenagers and of course a focal point for social use by Harbour residents in general. In short a 'heart' for our community.

Play areas are virtually non-existent on the Harbour, as is a grassed playing field, so it is not surprising that our children play on the streets. These shortfalls badly need rectifying and the suggestion has been made that a play area be integrated with each of the five sites. Last but by no means least a Health Centre and extension to the current primary school facilities to cope with the current shortfall in places have both been proposed as essential in the SHRA response. We recognise the commercial imperative for Carillion but it is about time commercial and social priorities saw a more equitable balance.

Where are your photographs?

The response to our photographic competition has been very disappointing; there must be a huge number of harbour related photographs lurking in drawers and on computers that

would be suitable for entry. Or, why not take a walk around the harbour with your camera and keep your eyes open for that winning shot? What about your garden, a great subject at this time of the year? What about the BBQ, or the kids' party? The subjects are endless.

The variety of architecture around the harbour is staggering, why not look for that unusual angle or light effect. And, this is the biggest marina in northern Europe, what about those boats?

The subject of the competition is "In and Around the Harbour". Don't be afraid to be creative; think outside the square. There will be one prize; the winner will get a meal for two at one of the harbour restaurants.

Alan Everard of the BSPB has kindly offered to judge the entries, which should be prints, colour or monochrome, no larger than 8" by 10" (20cm by 25cm). Alternatively, digital images will be accepted, but only if submitted on a CD.

Your entries should be sent to:

Photographic Competition,
SHRA,
PO box 124,
Eastbourne BN23 9AW

Unadopted Roads

The condition of unadopted roads on the harbour continues to be an issue. However, until the EBC and the County Council stop dragging their heels, the main roads through the harbour remain the responsibility of Carillion, whilst the residential roads are the developers' responsibility.

Carillion fails residents yet again

Once again, Carillion have put profit before the welfare of residents. The new berths in the North Harbour are now being occupied, but the facilities to support them have not been provided. We have learnt that the land at the end of the North Harbour, which we had been told was for berth holder parking and an ablutions block, will now be used for high-density residential development. As a consequence, boat owners, and their visitors, are taking up what little parking is available in residential areas. But worse, as there are no toilet facilities within reasonable distance of these berths, it is likely that some boat owners will be tempted to discharge their waste directly into the harbour, with a consequential risk to health.

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Residents and SHRA defeat Westbury planning application.

At the meeting of the EBC planning committee on 19th July, residents of the South Harbour, assisted by members of the SHRA committee, put forward the case for rejecting the application by Westbury Homes with respect to the area surrounding the lock gates on the South side of the harbour.

The application sought permission to soft landscape the triangular part of the site with grass and meadow planting, together with the creation of six car parking spaces next to Key West, the road giving access to the locks. Footway works were proposed around the Inner Harbour, with retaining walls and ramped sections between the existing promenade walkway and the lock area.

Further, it proposed a berth holder parking area for 37 cars, arranged in two rows, near the locks and the construction of a section of promenade adjacent the Outer Harbour, together with a turning area next to the locks, for use by the resort's "Dotto Train".

Residents had tabled objections to the application for a variety of reasons, including:

- Westbury should be made to deliver Prowting's original plans on the basis of which the properties were sold
- There will be potential congestion as the result of this application
- The parking spaces should be for residents and visitors rather than berth holders
- The Dotto train would create a loss of privacy, noise and disturbance and a safety issue as there is not enough room to accommodate it
- The landscaping next to the Piazza would best be undertaken in gravel and shingle with rock features, hardy shrubs and pampas grass
- An open area of grassland would cause problems with dog fouling
- "Meadow Grass" is totally unsuitable for such an exposed environment
- This area would be better utilised by landscaping for the enjoyment of both visitors and residents rather than for parking cars
- Where are the public toilets, kiosks, seats, etc?
- The originally approved landscape scheme should be implemented
- The gateway to the harbour will be spoilt by a lack of thought and imagination

In addition to the written objections, several of the residents, and Carol Golder on behalf of the SHRA, addressed the committee.

Despite the very strong recommendation by the planning officers, the committee accepted the validity of the objections and unanimously rejected the application. The most encouraging aspect of the rejection was the realisation by the planning committee that this was an opportunity to address the problem of over-development of the harbour and redress the balance in favour of the residents and visitors.

RNLI regatta.

The RNLI regatta that will take place over the August Bank Holiday weekend should be great fun. Daytime events include rowing, sailing and powerboat races and a fishing boat race. There will be a 'Duck Hunt' on Saturday, a 'Treasure Hunt' on Sunday and a boat handling competition on Monday.

Evening events; on Saturday there will be a pig roast and live music from the Cromer Smugglers, on Sunday a BBQ and disco, and on Monday food and disco. Admission to evening events is by ticket only. Tickets, price £7.50, can be obtained from the Lifeboat Station. For more information, call 01323-470206 or check on the SHRA website www.shra.co.uk

This will be an great opportunity to support this valued voluntary service, and have an enjoyable weekend at the same time.

What do you think?

It is now almost three months since the current committee took office and we hope that you are happy with what we are doing. However, we need your feedback. Please let us know how you would like the SHRA to develop over the coming months. Let us know what we are doing well, and how we can improve. Let us have your ideas for community events that can bring residents together. Let us know what you can do to help. Write to us at:

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